"Men and Measures of '76."

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED NEAR DILLSBURG, PENN'A.,

JULY 4, 1856.

BY

JOSEPH A. MURRAY,

PASTOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

CARLISLE, PA.
PRINTED AT THE CARLISLE HERALD OFFICE.
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Celebration of the Day.

Many of the families of Dillsburg, with a number of persons from the neighborhood and Cumberland county, between three and four hundred, spent the FOURTH very pleasantly in the beautiful grove belonging to Mr. James Williams, who was chosen President of the day. The celebration was the result of two days' notice and preparation, and the committee gentlemen deserve great credit for their active services. Prayer was offered both at the commencement and close of the celebration. Innocent exercises and amusements characterized the occasion; and, in addition to these, the immortal Declaration was read, and subsequently an address delivered. The ladies, worthy of all praise, provided most abundantly, and both dinner and supper were served in handsome style. The presence of the Dillsburg Band contributed largely to the agreeable entertainment of the guests; and all enjoyed themselves in a becoming manner. After the address was delivered, a desire was expressed to have it published: and a meeting in the evening resulted as follows.

Dillsburg, July 4, 1856.

Rev. J. A. Murray,—

Dear Sir: The undersigned have the honor to present their acknowledgments to you for the able, eloquent, and patriotic address this day delivered before the citizens of our village and neighborhood, and most respectfully solicit a copy for publication. Yours, &c.

JAMES M. SHEARER,
SAMUEL WAGENER,
SAMUEL CLARK,
E. W. HURST,
JAMES J. MOORE,
JOHN C. WEIMER.

Dillsburg, July 5, 1856.

Gentlemen: I am truly grateful for the kind partiality of my friends, and sincerely thank you for the complimentary manner in which you have been pleased to speak of my address, regretting, however, that it is not better worthy the occasion and your good opinion.

As you know, our recent celebration was the result of short notice, and it was only on the 2nd instant that I received the invitation to speak on the Fourth. My time for preparation being thus limited, with other duties claiming and receiving my attention, I could not give the address that care I would have desired. Hence I have hesitated to comply with your request.

But, ever willing to contribute my mite to the cause of patriotism, and our country, and hoping that the reminiscences and reflections embodied in the address may be productive of some good, I herewith place it at your disposal.

Yours truly,

J. A. MURRAY.

Address.

Ladies, Gentlemen, and Friends:—Need I apologize for appearing before you on this occasion? As well need the patriot apologize for loving his country, rejoicing in its prosperity, and desiring to see the institutions of freedom remembered, appreciated, and perpetuated. It is well, occasionally, to be relieved from the daily routine of life—its regular duties and cares and responsibilities, and participate in such innocent and healthful employments and enjoyments as those in which we are now engaged. It is refreshing, invigorating, and in every respect compensative. It is well, occasionally, for friends and families, without regard to age or sex or party or condition, thus to mingle together, socially and kindly, in mutually pleasant efforts to make each other happy; forming, renewing and strengthening friendships; interchanging the courtesies of life, freely, fully, and unconstrainedly. We are all possessors of the same common nature; members of the same great family; equal sharers of the same blessings secured to us by our common country; and it is our duty and privilege to act accordingly. Let there be no strife among us, other than the commendable strife of doing what we can to render each other happy. And if there be a time particularly appropriate to be thus spent, it is the present time. This is our annual jubilee—our

national holiday—a day deservedly memorable—a day which, to us, is fraught with associations and reminiscences peculiarly interesting and instructive. May it never be forgotten! May it never be abused, or perverted to improper purposes. May its occurrence be ever hailed with delight, and its observance such as the true patriot approves.

This day commemorates the adoption of the Declaration of Independence, by which act the American colonies were absolved from all political connexion with Great Britain, and their union and freedom solemnly avowed and proclaimed. It was an important act—the result of great oppression from the mother country, and of calm and patriotic deliberation and determination by the colonies: an act, too, that has been productive of incalculable advantage both to America and the world. It is therefore worthy of commemoration; and its festive observance was anticipated at the time of its adoption in a manner not unworthy of recital here.

John Adams was a member of the illustrious Congress that declared Independence. He was also one of the signers. According to the testimony of Thomas Jefferson, Mr. Adams "was the pillar of its support on the floor of Congress, its ablest advocate and defender." He witnessed the triumph of his exertions; and, in a letter to his wife, thus gave expression to the ardent and enlightened feelings of patriotism—"Yesterday the greatest question was decided that was ever debated in America; and greater, perhaps, never was or will be decided among men. A resolution was passed, without one dissenting colony, 'that these United States are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States.' The day is passed. The Fourth of July, 1776, will be a memorable epoch in the history of America. I am apt to believe it will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated as the day

of deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to Almighty God. It ought to be solemnized with pomps, shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations, from one end of the continent to the other, from this time forward for ever. You will think me transported with enthusiasm, but I am not. I am well aware of the toil, and blood, and treasure, that it will cost to maintain this declaration, and support and defend these States; yet, through all the gloom, I can see the rays of light and glory. I can see that the end is worth more than all the means; and that posterity will triumph, although you and I may rue, which I hope we shall not."*

Such were the sagacious utterances of an honest patriot; the deliverances of a far-reaching forecast —and they have been fully realized. To "maintain" the Declaration actually did cost much of "toil, and blood, and treasure;" but it was successfully maintained, and is the standing monument of their imperishable fame. The observance of that eventful day has been "the great anniversary festival" for the last eighty years, and may it never cease to be such while time continues. That was, indeed, a period of "gloom;" but through it all could the statesman and patriot look and predict a glorious future—a future "worth more than all the means" employed to bring it about. Eighty years have just elapsed since the independence of our country was declared; and, under the blessing of heaven, how rapidly have we grown and prospered during that time!—in territory, in population, in commerce, in agriculture, in manufactures, in science and art, in the various means of self-defence, and in all the elements of wealth and greatness and a glorious civilization, beyond that of any other nation.

* Sanderson's "Biography of the Signers," pp. 302, 303.

We are now entering the eighty-first year of our independent nationality, and within this comparatively brief period we have grown like a giant, from a state of colonial dependence to that of a country second to none on the face of the globe. Surrounded as we are with the privileges of civil and religious liberty, well may we rejoice in our birth-right and our country, and immeasurably great are our obligations to the Bountiful Giver of it all. Look at our progress and condition. Eighty years ago we had thirteen States, now we have thirty-one, and territory enough for as many more. Then our whole population was about three millions, and now it is eight times as many, and rapidly increasing. Then the area of our country was eight hundred thousand square miles, and now it is three millions. Soon after our government went into operation, our imports were thirty-one millions, and now they are one hundred and eighty millions. We had then no railroad, now we have twelve thousand miles of it. Then we had two hundred post-offices, now we have over twenty thousand; as well as the Telegraph extending through all parts of the country, communicating intelligence with the speed of lightning. And look at our innumerable schools and colleges and seminaries and churches and various benevolent institutions! What a giant-like growth do all these things indicate! And what cause we have to adore the Great Ruler of nations, under whose auspices we have been formed, nurtured, preserved, guided, and enriched.

The *Fourth of July* naturally carries our minds back to the men that were instrumental in making it so memorable. Who were they? What were they? Great and deserved was the compliment given to them by the illustrious Chatham, then a brilliant member of Parliament. He thus expressed himself—"I must declare and avow, that in all my reading and observation, and it has been my favo-

rite pursuit, I have studied and admired the master states of the world, but for solidity of reasoning, force of sagacity, and wisdom of conclusion, under such a complication of difficult circumstances, no nation or body of men can stand in preference to the General Congress at Philadelphia."* A distinguished jurist of our own country† thus spake of them more than twenty years ago—"The common characteristic of the Congress of 1776 is pure public virtue; the striking feature of its measures is mature wisdom. Upon the foundation of virtue and wisdom, thus happily united, they built up the edifice of their own enduring fame, by achieving for their country what in all succeeding ages will continue to engage the unqualified respect and admiration of mankind. * * * As men, as patriots, and as gentlemen, it is but simple truth to say, that, as a body, the Congress of 1776 never was equaled." Another eminent jurist,‡ in a work recently published, thus speaks of them—"History records no instance of a political body charged with more important public duties and responsibilities than the Congress of the American colonies. It had to organize, in the midst of war and revolution, a new and untried government for the union of thirteen separate colonies. It had to provide for the military and civil establishments of that government; conduct war against one of the oldest and most powerful governments of the Old World; regulate commerce; create and collect revenue. It had to legislate not only against the public enemy, but also against tories and traitors within their fold. The men who discharged these trusts with wisdom, integrity, labor, and devotion to their country, were men of no common energy, ability, and purity."

* Niles' Principles and Acts of the Revolution, p. 371.

† John Sergeant, LL.D. Eulogy on Carroll, p. 13. 1832.

‡ Hon. George Chambers: Tribute to the Early Settlers of Pennsylsylvania, p. 111. 1856.

And such, I may add, is the uniform testimony of all reliable history. While the colonists, at the outset of the struggle, deprecated a severance from England; while they merely petitioned for their rights, and did so repeatedly and respectfully, yet it was all in vain. And, on the 20th of May, 1775, the Scotch-Irish citizens of Mecklenberg county, North Carolina, were the very first to adopt resolutions in favor of independence. On the 15th of May, 1776, the Virginia convention instructed its delegates in Congress to propose to that body a Declaration of Independence; and in obedience to this, Richard Henry Lee, of Virginia, submitted to Congress, on the 7th of June, the memorable resolution—"That the United Colonies are, and ought to be, free and independent States, and that their political connexion with Great Britain is, and ought to be, dissolved." After a warm debate, this resolution was passed the next day. On the 11th of June a committee was appointed to prepare a formal declaration of independence. Thomas Jefferson, of Virginia, John Adams, of Massachusetts, Benjamin Franklin, of Pennsylvania, Roger Sherman, of Connecticut, and R. R. Livingston, of New York, constituted the committee. They were all conspicuous members of that Congress,—and may the memory of them never die.

It was proposed among themselves that each member should draft a paper according to his own judgment, and submit it to the consideration of the committee, and the draft which seemed to embody sentiments most congenial to the feelings of the whole, should be adopted by the committee. Mr. Jefferson was the first to read, and his production so fully met the views of the other members of the committee, that it was at once adopted. This document was brought up in Congress on the 1st of July, 1776. It was adopted on the 4th; and signed on the 2nd day of August following.

It is said of Mr. Ellery, one of the Signers, that he often spoke of the signing of the Declaration, and spoke of it as an event which many regarded with awe, but none with fear. "I was determined," he used to say, "to see how they all looked as they signed what might be their death-warrant. I placed myself beside the Secretary, Charles Thomson, and eyed each closely as he affixed his name to the document. Undaunted resolution was displayed in every countenance."* Of the fifty-six distinguished patriots who signed the Declaration, five were from Massachusetts, three from New Hampshire, two from Rhode Island, four from Connecticut, four from New York, five from New Jersey, nine from Pennsylvania, three from Delaware, four from Maryland, seven from Virginia, three from North Carolina, four from South Carolina, and three from Georgia.

Congress sat in Philadelphia; and Pennsylvania furnished the largest number of delegates. In this connexion, I will be excused for mentioning some facts, particularly interesting to us as inhabitants of Cumberland and York counties. Although a separation from England had not been contemplated by the colonists at the commencement of the contest, yet the necessity of it afterwards became apparent; and "the freemen of the county of Cumberland, in this province, were amongst the first to form the opinion, that the safety and welfare of the colonies did render separation from the mother country necessary." They "were in advance of their representatives in the Assembly and in Congress on the subject of independence."† In November, 1775, the Pennsylvania Assembly, in appointing delegates to Congress, instructed them to oppose any measure that would lead to a separation. In the succeeding May, the people of this

* Biography of the Signers, p. 209.
† Judge Chambers' Tribute, p. 95.

valley presented a memorial to the Assembly, asking the withdrawment of the instructions given to the delegates, and in June following they were withdrawn. All honor to old "Mother Cumberland!" Mr. James Wilson, one of the Signers, and of Scotch nativity, was from Cumberland; and, after the organization of the Federal government, became a Judge of the Supreme Court of the United States. York county had also a Signer, in the person of James Smith, of Irish nativity. He died in July, 1806, at the advanced age of 93 years, and his mortal remains repose in the burial-ground of the Presbyterian church at York. While living there, and during an early period, he raised and drilled a company, of which he was chosen captain. "This was the first corps of volunteer soldiers organized in Pennsylvania with a view to oppose the armies of Great Britain, and Mr. Smith was entitled to great praise for this practical and efficient exercise of patriotism, by which, at a very early period of the contest, indeed several months before the first shedding of blood at Lexington, he set an example of so salutary a character."*

Would you know the birth-places of the illustrious Fifty-six? Ten were natives of Massachusetts, nine of Virginia, five of Pennsylvania, five of Maryland, four of New Jersey, four of Connecticut, four of South Carolina, three of New York, two of Rhode Island, and two of Delaware—making forty-eight who were born in the colonies. Of the eight others, three were natives of Ireland, two of England, two of Scotland, and one of Wales.† And among these foreigners were some of our most active and efficient patriots. In regard to their age, some were young men, others in the meridian of life, and a few quite advanced in years. Edward

* Biography of the Signers, p. 478.

† Natives of *Ireland*, Matthew Thornton, James Smith, and George Taylor; *England*, Robert Morris, and Button Gwinnett; *Scotland*, John Witherspoon, and James Wilson; *Wales*, Francis Lewis.

Rutledge and Thomas Lynch, both from South Carolina, were each twenty-seven years old, and the youngest members of the body. The venerable Franklin was in his seventy-first year, and the oldest member. Their average age at that time was about forty-four years. As it respects the educational standing of the Signers, eighteen were graduates in American colleges, three of the University of Cambridge in England, and one of the University of Edinburg. Fourteen had been liberally instructed by private tutors, and the rest had received some elementary education—were men of extensive reading, sober reflection, and correct judgment. It is said, that "the Congress did not contain one uneducated member.*

Most of the Signers were in such a condition of life as to remove all suspicion of selfishness in their conduct, and establish their character for disinterested patriotism. Hancock, Morris, and Carroll were in affluent circumstances, and willingly hazarded all. Others were persons of independent fortunes, which they cheerfully staked; and nearly "all had, besides life, something to lose, and nothing but liberty to gain, from the conflict which they invoked."* As you may suppose, these worthies were from different professions and pursuits of life. There were twenty-four lawyers, thirteen planters or farmers, nine merchants, five physicians, two mechanics, one clergyman, of the Presbyterian church, one mariner, and one surveyor. "Many of these were engaged in mingled pursuits, and nearly all were more or less interested in agriculture."* These celebrated men solemnly pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor, in the cause of American independence; and though they suffered much in the struggle of eight years duration, yet not one proved false to his pledge. Not one, ever afterwards, did an act to

* Hon. Robert T. Conrad.

tarnish his character, and not one died with a stain upon his name. They were men of sterling moral character; men deeply sensible of their dependence on the August Arbiter of the destiny of nations; men who devoutly recognized their allegiance to Him, and whose religious feeling was intimately connected with their political action. Their sessions were opened regularly with prayer. They repeatedly recommended the public and solemn observance of days of fasting and prayer, as well as days of thanksgiving and praise, and on these occasions they adjourned and cordially participated in the services thus recommended. It was the Congress of the Revolution that ordered the importation of "20,000 copies of the Bible,"* but afterwards, when the unsettled state of the country prevented the execution of this order, that virtuous body appointed a committee to attend to the printing of the sacred Scriptures; and the first American edition of the English Bible was published in 1781, with the resolution of Congress recommending it as a "pious and laudable undertaking."† It was the same Congress that "recommended to the several States to take the most effectual measures for the promotion of true religion and good morals, and for the suppression of theatrical entertainments, horse-racing, gaming, and such other diversions as are productive of idleness, dissipation, and general depravity of manners." And it was the same Congress that resolved, "that any person holding an office under the United States, who shall promote, encourage, or attend play-houses and theatrical entertainments, shall be deemed unworthy to hold such office, and shall be accordingly dismissed."‡ Ah! it was the old Congress that adopted such measures—but none the less truly wise on that

* Journal for Sep. 11, 1777.
† Anderson's Annals of the Bible, pp. 489, 490.
‡ Journal for Oct. 12 and 16, 1778.

account. How their spirit rebukes that which has become so rampant throughout the land, and pleads for reform. Nearly all the Signers became greatly distinguished in their respective States and in the nation. The two most active in favor of the Declaration—Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, were elevated to the Presidency of the Republic; and, "by a providential coincidence, departed this life on the anniversary of the day of their triumph,"* July 4, 1826. These patriots lived long, unusually long, and were thus providentially allowed to share in the rich harvest, the seed of which they had sown in tears and prayers and blood. Ten lived over fifty years, thirteen lived over sixty years, nine lived over seventy years, nine lived over eighty years, one died aged ninety, another aged ninety-three, another aged ninety-five; and their average age, at the time of their death, was sixty-eight years. Their number was fifty-six, and just fifty-six years afterwards, in 1832, the last of the number died—the venerable Charles Carroll of Carrollton, aged ninety-five years. They are dead; but their work still survives,—and may it stand to the end of time. Let their memory be embalmed in our hearts, carefully cherished, and as carefully perpetuated. "Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation."†

> "Go call thy sons,—instruct them what a DEBT
> They owe their ancestors, and make them swear
> To pay it, by transmitting down entire
> Those sacred rights to which themselves were born."

Yes, my friends, our position is alike honorable and responsible. Let us cherish a grateful recollection of our revolutionary sires—emulate their virtues—and give unimpaired to posterity the legacy of free institutions, in the enjoyment of which

* Hon. Robert T. Conrad.
† Joel, i. 3.

we have lived and prospered. Their great work is our rich inheritance, and that great work bears the glorious impress of *Union, Independence, Freedom.* "Why shall it not stand? We are stronger than they were, in numbers and wealth. Are we weaker in wisdom and in virtue? Are we less able to appreciate the blessings provided for us, less willing to make the exertions necessary for preserving them? A doubt implies degeneracy. It supposes a want of enlightened patriotism; an unaccountable blindness to our own true interests; an incredible indifference to the happiness of those who are to come after us; an unheard of insensibility to the great trust committed to our keeping. For sure it is, that if ever this glorious fabric should fall to ruins—which may Heaven in its mercy forbid—it must be because there is not wisdom and virtue enough to support it. The age in which it perishes will be the opposite of that in which it was constructed, and as the one has earned undying fame, the other will merit universal execration."* As we are highly distinguished for our privileges, both civil and religious, alike numerous and great, let us be correspondingly thankful and watchful, gratefully recognize the hand of God in our favored lot, and assiduously guard against whatever would jeopardize our world-renowned inheritance. Our Revolutionary ancestors had to struggle with adversity; we must contend with the seductive evils of prosperity—luxury and ease—and not allow them to blind us or lull us asleep, and so enfeeble and unnerve us. Let us frequently, and especially in times of sectional agitation or general disquiet, look back, and carefully study the men and measures of '76. Their history is suggestive and instructive—let us profit by it. They were emphatically "One People"—so proclaimed in their mem-

* John Sergeant, LL.D. 1832.

orable Declaration. We are still "One People," and Heaven forbid that we should ever become a dismembered people.

"O, God! look down upon the land that thou hast loved so well,
And grant, that in unbroken truth, her children still may dwell—
Nor while the grass grows on the hill and streams flow through the vale,
May they forget their father's faith, or in their covenant fail!
God keep the fairest, noblest land that lies beneath the sun,
OUR COUNTRY, OUR WHOLE COUNTRY, AND OUR COUNTRY EVER ONE."

Let us, my friends, ever deprecate the horrid monster of domestic strife or civil war—worse in its prosecution and results than foreign war—and patriotically avoid whatever would tend to produce it. No person should think of calculating the value of the Union, and no true patriot will enter into such a calculation. By one and all it ought to be regarded as sacred, priceless, and inviolable—to be maintained intact at all hazards. It is the ark of our civil and religious privileges, and paralyzed be the sacrilegious hand that would disturb it! It is the citadel of our strength and glory, and confusion attend those who would presumptuously attempt to overthrow it! Let the patriotic sentiment —never to be dishonored—be emblazoned on the keystone of our national arch: "Liberty *and* Union, now and for ever, one and inseparable."*

Yes, let us love the Union, and endeavor to promote its greater strength and secure its certain perpetuity. Let us be a God-fearing, God-honoring and God-serving people. Let there be no fraternal alienations. Let sectional strife be discouraged. Let us live in peace and harmony. Let us ever feel and act towards our brethren of all parts of the Union, as we would have them feel and act towards us. Let this be the patriotic determination here, and elsewhere, and everywhere. Let us be a law-respecting, law-abiding, and order-loving people.

* Webster, 1830.

Then are we safe and happy—safe and happy in the enjoyment of Heaven's favor and protection; then will the same kind and wise and powerful hand that has guided, guarded, and blessed us in times past, continue to do so in all time to come. Then may we, with faith and hope and strong encouragement, join in the prayer—

"This Union—this Union—O, God! may it stand
As firm as its mountains, as vast as its land!
Thou hast led it, like Israel of old, by thy might,
Through the dangers of day—through the terrors of night;
Thy blessing has guarded it on from its birth,
Till it seems a bright spot, like thine Eden on earth;
Then fore'er may it be by thy mercy designed,
The glory, the wonder, the pride of mankind!"